

One example is, we keep hearing people across the aisle. There were 1 minute given over and over last week asking, Where is the Republican bill? We have a number of bills. I have had one filed since the end of July. We have specifically asked CBO to give us a score since August 19. They said show support from your party. Every leader who had an impact—they told us they could help get it scored—has requested it. We have been shut out. We have been shut out. Where is that unbiased body? It is sad they have disappeared.

□ 1015

HEALTH CARE AND TRANSPARENCY

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, on January 31, 2008, during the Democratic Presidential primary, President Obama said during the campaign, "That's what I will do in bringing all parties together, not negotiating behind closed doors, but bringing all parties together, and broadcasting these negotiations on C-SPAN so that the American people can see what the choices are because part of what we have to do is enlist the American people in this process."

Not negotiating behind closed doors.

It has now been over 5 months since the White House announced numerous deals with major stakeholders in the health care debate. Little to no details of these negotiations have been released by the White House. Despite the assertion of then-candidate Obama's promise to make all health care reform negotiations public, we have very few details on exactly what was agreed to in this highly publicized, yet guardedly secret, negotiations.

How can the United States Congress be diligent in creating the policy before us without these crucial details surrounding these deals? We must learn what the negotiations mean for the millions of concerned Americans.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, September 30, 2009.

President BARACK OBAMA,
The White House,
Washington, DC

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT. I write you once again on the topic of health care reform. As you know, Democrat leaders in the House of Representatives are currently working to merge the three committee bills. Meanwhile, the two Senate products are waiting to be merged pending completion of the Senate Finance Committee's mark-up.

I have closely followed the health care debate for months, making note of actions by all parties involved, including the House, Senate, White House, advocate groups, and the health care industry. These reforms have wide-reaching implications, and you have stressed the importance of conducting business in public so that the American people are aware and involved in the process.

In fact, during a Democratic Presidential primary debate on January 31, 2008, you said: "That's what I will do in bringing all parties

together, not negotiating behind closed doors, but bringing all parties together, and broadcasting those negotiations on C-SPAN so that the American people can see what the choices are, because part of what we have to do is enlist the American people in this process."

It has now been over four months since the White House announced numerous deals with major stakeholders in the health care debate to save upwards of \$2 trillion in the health care system. Little to no details regarding the negotiations have been released, and recent actions and press reports have reminded me of the importance of openness and transparency throughout the legislative process.

Roll Call reports today that negotiators working in the House to merge the three committee bills plan to trim the cost of the legislation by roughly \$200 billion. I wonder what programs or services are being cut, who will be affected, and how these cuts are being decided.

In the Senate Finance Committee's markup, Senator Bill Nelson (D-Fl) introduced an amendment regarding drug prices in Medicare and Medicaid. During the debate on the amendment, Senator Tom Carper (D-Del), while arguing against the amendment, said "Whether you like PhRMA or not, we have a deal," referring to the deal PhRMA cut with the White House earlier this year.

In addition, within the Senate Finance Committee plan is a commission to slow the growth of Medicare spending, most likely through changes to reimbursement policy. However, hospitals would be exempt from this commission because, according to CongressDaily, "they already negotiated a cost cutting agreement" with the White House.

Despite your promise to make all health care reform negotiations in public, we still have very few details on what exactly was agreed to during these highly publicized negotiations. In fact, even the stakeholders involved have, at times, seemed at odds with what was actually agreed to. But the one thing we all know is that, through press statements, many deals were made. Unfortunately, even where brief descriptions of policy goals are available, details on achieving these goals are absent, a point made by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO).

I am compelled to ask—how could Congress have done its due diligence in creating the policy before us without crucial details surrounding these deals? Were the votes we have seen in the Senate Finance Committee as of late a direct result of these backroom negotiations? Will CBO be able to actually score any of these deals to apply those cost savings to legislation? Were these negotiations in the best interests of patients?

Having little to no information, I cannot judge. However, this begs even more questions. Is Congress enacting the best policy reforms for Americans, or are certain changes being made or not made because of the negotiations orchestrated by the White House? Will smaller stakeholders suffer more from our policy choices because of what larger groups may have negotiated behind closed doors?

Mr. President, I do not write this letter to chide you for engaging in what I consider the most pressing debate before Congress. I applaud you for your leadership in compelling Congress to act. In order to fully understand the policy choices before us, though, we need to know what took place earlier this year during these meetings at the White House. You have made it very clear that you value transparency and have sought to make your Administration stand out in this regard. As a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee's subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, so do I. The last

thing I would want to see is a formal investigation of these meetings.

Thus, I formally request full disclosure by the White House in the following areas regarding all meetings with health care stakeholders occurring earlier this year on the topic of securing an agreement on health reform legislation, efforts to pay for any such legislation, and undertakings to bend the out year cost curve:

1. A list of all agreements entered into, in writing or in principle, between any and all individuals associated with the White House and any and all individuals, groups, associations, companies or entities who are stakeholders in health care reform, as well as the nature, sum and substance of the agreements; and,

2. The name of any and all individuals associated with the White House who participated in the decision-making process during these negotiations, and the names, dates and titles of meetings they participated in regarding negotiations with the aforementioned entities in question one; and,

3. The names of any and all individuals, groups, associations, companies or entities who requested a meeting with the White House regarding health care reform who were denied a meeting.

In our efforts to improve access to health care services, the American people expect us to act in their best interests, rather than protecting business interests of those who are interested in currying favor in Washington, DC. If these health related stakeholders have made concessions to Washington politicians without asking anything in exchange for the patients they serve, Congress and, more importantly, the American public deserve to know. Conversely, if they sought out protections for industry-specific policies, we need to know that as well.

We must learn what these negotiations mean for the millions of concerned Americans. How they will be better served, including having affordable health coverage and access to the providers they need? These negotiations may have produced consensus on policy changes that are proper and needed, but Congress will never know for sure that we are acting in our constituents' best interests until all the facts are known.

I look forward to the opportunity to speak with you at your earliest convenience on this matter. Should your staff have any questions about this request please contact me or my Legislative Director J.P. Paluskiewicz at my Washington, D.C. office.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL C. BURGESS, M.D.,
Member of Congress.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Ms. Curtis, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate agrees to the report of the committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2996) "An Act making appropriations for the Department of the Interior, environment, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2010, and for other purposes."

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 106-286, the Chair, on behalf of the President of the Senate, and after consultation with the Republican Leader, appoints the following member to serve on the Congressional-Executive Commission on the People's Republic of China:

The Senator from Florida, Mr. LEMIEUX.

The message also announced that pursuant to Public Law 99-498, as amended by Public Law 110-315, the Chair, on behalf of the President pro tempore, appoints the following individuals to the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance:

David Gruen of Wyoming.

William Luckey of Kentucky.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

THE TENACIOUS WARRIOR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE of Texas. Madam Speaker, America is about people. Who we are and what we are is because of the people who are Americans. They are individuals who have lived and died and influenced the rest of us because of their tenacious spirit and determination.

Madam Speaker, I am a history fan. I love American history. I also love Texas history. Not the history of dates and movements, but the history of the lives of individual Americans who have made a difference.

Roy Benavidez was one of those Americans. Roy Benavidez was born in south Texas in a small town called Cuero on August 5, 1935. He was the son of a sharecropper. He was an orphan, and he had mixed blood of Yaqui Indian and Hispanic. He was raised by his uncle after he lost his own family, and eventually he dropped out of school when he was 15. He was a migrant farm worker to take care of his family. He worked all over Texas and part of Colorado in the sugar beet fields and the cotton fields.

Eventually he decided to join the Texas National Guard and then the United States Army in 1955. He joined up in Houston, Texas. And in 1965, he was sent to Vietnam as a member of the 82nd Airborne.

While serving as an adviser to the South Vietnamese Army, he stepped on a land mine in South Vietnam. U.S. Army doctors at Brooke Army Medical Center told him he would never walk again. But he did walk. And not only that, he volunteered and returned back to Vietnam as a staff sergeant in the Army Special Forces; we call them the Green Berets.

On May 2, 1968, his life and the lives of his fellow troopers changed forever. It is a story that is almost unbelievable.

On the morning of May 2, 1968, a 12-man Special Forces team was inserted into Cambodia to observe a large-scale North Vietnamese troop movement. They were eventually discovered by the

enemy. Most of the team members were very close friends of Roy Benavidez, who was the forward operating officer in Loc Ninh, Vietnam.

Three helicopters were sent to rescue the 12-man team, but they were unable to land because of the heavy enemy concentration. When a second attempt was made to reach the stranded team, Benavidez jumped on board one of the helicopters armed only with a bowie knife.

As the helicopters reached the landing zone, Benavidez realized the team members were likely too severely wounded to move to the helicopters, so by himself he ran through heavy small-arms fire to the wounded soldiers. He was wounded himself in the leg, the face, and the head in the process. He reorganized the team and signaled helicopters to land. Despite his injuries, Benavidez was able to carry off half the wounded men to the helicopters. He then collected the classified documents held by a now-dead team leader. As he completed this task, he was wounded again by an exploding grenade in the back, and then he was shot in the stomach.

At that moment, the waiting helicopter pilot was also mortally wounded, and the helicopter crashed. Benavidez ran to collect the stunned crash survivors and form a perimeter. He directed air support. He ordered another extraction attempt, and was wounded again when shot in the thigh. At this point he was losing so much blood from his face wounds that his vision became blurred. Finally, another helicopter landed and as Benavidez carried a wounded friend to it, he was clubbed in the head with a rifle butt by an enemy soldier and then bayoneted twice.

Madam Speaker, Benavidez was wounded in that one battle in that one day 37 times. He had seven gunshot wounds, he had mortar fragments in his back, and two bayonet wounds. But he saved the lives of eight of his fellow troopers.

Later he was presumed dead and zipped up in a body bag; but right before they zipped up the bag, he spit in the doctor's face letting the doctor know yes, he was still alive. Amazing people, these young guns of the Green Berets.

Madam Speaker, this is a photograph of Master Sergeant Roy Benavidez. He eventually recovered from all of those wounds and received the Distinguished Service Cross, and many years later Ronald Reagan presented him with the medal he wears around his neck in this photograph, the Congressional Medal of Honor. President Reagan stated here in Washington, D.C., on presentation of that medal that if this were a movie, no one would really believe it could ever happen. What Roy Benavidez did that day is unbelievable. I will insert the Medal of Honor citation for Roy Benavidez.

After he retired from the military, this seventh-grade dropout went

around America talking about the importance of education. He talked to young gang members, he talked to the Hispanic youth, telling them to stay in school and get an education. He was an amazing individual. A Navy ship has been named after him. Several elementary schools in Texas have been named after Master Sergeant Roy Benavidez, and even a toy company has issued the Roy Benavidez G.I. Joe action figure.

□ 1915

In Texas there are a disproportionately high number of Hispanic Americans who volunteer for the military. They are American Patriots. Some legal immigrants even join and serve in Iraq and Afghanistan in the hope they will become U.S. citizens. Madam Speaker, as we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, one of those great Hispanic Americans was Roy Benavidez, and he lived the American dream the way he wanted to.

And that's just the way it is.

BENAVIDEZ, ROY P.

Citation: Master Sergeant (then Staff Sergeant) Roy P. Benavidez United States Army, who distinguished himself by a series of daring and extremely valorous actions on 2 May 1968 while assigned to Detachment B56, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Republic of Vietnam. On the morning of 2 May 1968, a 12-man Special Forces Reconnaissance Team was inserted by helicopters in a dense jungle area west of Loc Ninh, Vietnam to gather intelligence information about confirmed large-scale enemy activity. This area was controlled and routinely patrolled by the North Vietnamese Army. After a short period of time on the ground, the team met heavy enemy resistance, and requested emergency extraction. Three helicopters attempted extraction, but were unable to land due to intense enemy small arms and anti-aircraft fire. Sergeant Benavidez was at the Forward Operating Base in Loc Ninh monitoring the operation by radio when these helicopters returned to off-load wounded crewmembers and to assess aircraft damage. Sergeant Benavidez voluntarily boarded a returning aircraft to assist in another extraction attempt. Realizing that all the team members were either dead or wounded and unable to move to the pick-up zone, he directed the aircraft to a nearby clearing where he jumped from the hovering helicopter, and ran approximately 75 meters under withering small arms fire to the crippled team. Prior to reaching the team's position he was wounded in his right leg, face, and head. Despite these painful injuries, he took charge, repositioning the team members and directing their fire to facilitate the landing of an extraction aircraft, and the loading of wounded and dead team members. He then threw smoke canisters to direct the aircraft to the team's position. Despite his severe wounds and under intense enemy fire, he carried and dragged half of the wounded team members to the awaiting aircraft. He then provided protective fire by running alongside the aircraft as it moved to pick up the remaining team members. As the enemy's fire intensified, he hurried to recover the body and classified documents on the dead team leader. When he reached the leader's body, Sergeant Benavidez was severely wounded by small arms fire in the abdomen and grenade fragments in his back. At nearly the same moment, the aircraft pilot was mortally wounded, and his helicopter crashed. Although in extremely critical condition due to his multiple wounds, Sergeant